

## **GREENSBORO PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING**

**Wednesday, March 12, 2008 – 6:00pm**  
**Trotter Recreation Center – 3906 Betula Street**

**PRESENT:** John Beaman, Jr., Paul Brown, Marc Bush (arrived 6:02pm), David Hoggard, Rose Marie Ponton, Randy Scott (excused 6:51)

**ABSENT:** Ken Free, Sr., Lori Galbreath

**STAFF PRESENT:** Steve Branson, John Hughes, Bonnie Kuester, Brooks Mullane, Lisa Murray, Lane Newsome, Marcie Richardson, Dee Scott, Mike Simpson, Laurie Thore, Chris Wilson

**OTHERS:** Alex Ashton (Guilford County), Roger Bardsley (Guilford County), Mary Rakestraw (City Council)

The regular meeting of the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Commission was held at Trotter Recreation Center. David Hoggard, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

### **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the February 13, 2008 Commission Meeting were approved as submitted.

### **Recognition**

Bonnie Kuester, Director, recognized the Parks and Recreation March Employee of the Month, Lisa Murray.

### **Trotter Recreation Center Presentation**

Dee Scott, Trotter Center Director, presented the Commission with historical information about Trotter Recreation Center and programs currently held there.

*Hoggard requested that anyone wanting to speak to a business item to do so prior to the business item.*

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Commission Tour**

Kuester confirmed that the Commission Tour will be held on April 9, 3:00-6:00pm in lieu of the scheduled Commission meeting.

### **Property Transfers**

Chris Wilson, Parks, Gardens, and Program Support Manager, stated that on February 9, 2008 City Council passed a resolution to proceed with the transfer of Hagan-Stone Park and Bryan Park at Guilford County (BPGC) to Guilford County. April 3, 2008 is the earliest the County will be able to officially accept the deeds to allow time for the County to address their Commission again. The transfers will provide the ability to move those operations forward. The County has already made a request to put 5 million dollars towards Hagan-Stone Park and 6 million dollars towards BPGC.

Ponton inquired if public information has been given about the reason why this is being done and has anyone talked with the Hagan family.

Wilson replied stating that this has been discussed with the Hagan family and they are very much in support of the transfer as well as the Bryan Foundation about BPGC. Wilson stated that in terms of public awareness he has spoken

to the media a few times and there have been a few articles about this situation. A public information session can be done; however most questions received have been from the media and not the public. Wilson has had conversations with a few citizens who have a vested interest in the facilities, some facility partners, and some patrons who are regular park users.

Scott inquired if there will be changes in the Hagan-Stone Park fees.

Wilson replied stating that the fees will be subject for the Commission's review just as all facilities, but at this time there will be no difference in the fees. This is a discussion to have with the County, but he doesn't believe this would happen right away.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Wild Turkey Trail Presentation**

Mark Gatehouse, Fat Tire Society, stated that in 1995 the Fat Tire Society was formed. The club motto is to Develop new trails, Ride, Enjoy and Maintain (DREAM). Gatehouse stated that he is the liaison between the City and cycling community. Cyclist have had input in park planning processes and he has taken the lead role several times in trail designs that support different user types. In 1994 there were approximately 10 miles of trails open to cyclists in Greensboro. Today there are 30 miles. Even with the improvement there is still a struggle to keep up with the growth and demand due to the popularity the sport.

Gatehouse continued stating the new Wild Turkey Trail design is complete. The trail runs parallel to the existing Nat Greene hiking trail. The Wild Turkey Trail is a very important link to the cycling community as it will connect to the greenway at the Lake Brandt marina and will allow people to ride a short section of road to access the Reedy Fork Trail. The trail will be 4.4 miles. Five work days were spent to complete 2.2 miles of the trail which totaled 640 man hours and consisted of 27-35 volunteers. The trail will consist of 124 feet of bridges and boardwalks. The existing boardwalk on the Nat Greene Trail will be extended. Currently the boardwalk is unsatisfactory in wet conditions and with the heavy increase in trail traffic the structure needs to be upgraded. There will be a 24 foot bridge over the stream crossing. The club is funding the boardwalks and bridges.

Gatehouse stated that there is a ride in June called the Epic 40 where cyclists ride 40 miles in Country Park and on the Watershed Trails. The serious mountain biker needs 50 miles of trails.

Bush inquired as to how many members are in the club.

Gatehouse replied stating approximately 200.

Ponton inquired if this will be a non-motorized trail and will users sign up when using the trail.

Gatehouse replied stating the trail will be used by non-motorized vehicles and users will not sign up.

Beaman inquired if there is ever trouble with people creating their own trails.

Gatehouse stated that the only problem comes from walkers who create short cuts. Bikers want more distance, therefore there are a very few issues.

Kuester expressed appreciation to Gatehouse and volunteers for their efforts and stated that the Parks and Recreation Department is recognized regularly for its trails and credit goes to volunteers with the safety issues they address and security they provide for our citizens. The department couldn't independently do this financially without their help.

Gatehouse thanked Kuester and staff, with special thanks to Mike Simpson.

*At this time Hoggard recognized the attendance of Councilperson, Mary Rakestraw. Councilperson Rakestraw stated that she attended on behalf of Trudy Wade.*

### **Downtown Greenway**

April Harris, Action Greensboro, introduced members of the Downtown Greenway steering committee, John McLendon, Trip Brown, and Dabney Sanders. Harris distributed to the Commission the Downtown Greenway Planned Route map, Downtown Greenway Project Team member list, and a Greensboro Bicentennial Commission member list. Harris then turned the presentation over to Trip Brown.

Trip Brown stated that the Downtown Greenway has been a product of Action Greensboro since 2001. Public meetings have been held with an outcome of citizens feeling this greenway would be helpful for downtown and our economy. The greenway will be a multi-use 4.8 mile loop around downtown. It will connect more than a dozen neighborhoods around the greenway. It will touch or come very close to touching 4 colleges. The greenway will be the hub of the current trail system which is approximately 80 miles. It will enhance the quality of life, encourage downtown development, and will be an economic attraction for young professionals. Brown stated they have had discussions with Chuck Flink, Greenways, Inc. who created the Greensboro BiPed Plan.

Trip Brown continued stating that this is the Bicentennial Commission's signature project for Greensboro's Bicentennial. The following organizations are involved with this project: Action Greensboro, City of Greensboro Parks and Recreation, GDOT, Department of Housing and Community Development, Planning Department, Moses Cone Wesley Long Community Health Foundation, Fit Community, Guilford County, Guilford County Schools, Downtown Greensboro, United Arts Council, Piedmont Land Conservancy, Bicycling in Greensboro (BIG), Neighborhood Congress, Greensboro College, and Elon Law School.

The southern section (first phase) of the greenway will touch Glenwood, Warnersville, Asheboro Square, Arlington Street, Old Asheboro and Southside neighborhoods. This section will run from Spring Garden Street (parallel with Freeman Mill Road) through the sports complex at Greensboro College to Brag Street across MLK Drive and over to Lee Street. The second phase will touch the East Market Street corridor as well as Cumberland Court and will go up Murrow Boulevard. The northern section will touch Latham Park, Fisher Park, and Aycock Neighborhoods. The western side (the magical mile) will go down the Norfolk and Southern rail bed touching Lake Daniels, Westerwood, Cedar Street, Bellmeade and College Hill neighborhoods. Meetings have been held and are ongoing with all of these neighborhoods.

Trip Brown stated that this will be a hub to Barber Park, future Keeley Park, northwest parks, and trails.

Art along the greenway will be a major component. Project team members have been working with the United Arts Council and are engaging the art community. Icons of approximately 50 ft. will be placed at each of the greenway corners with hopes they will be designed and fabricated by Greensboro artists. RFP's for the icons have been sent.

Trip Brown continued stating that this project will cost approximately 26 million dollars. Seventeen million dollars will be used for basic trail and transportation matters. Three million dollars will be used towards parks that will be an integral part of the trail, primarily the linear section up Murrow Blvd. Five million dollars will be used for pocket parks and trail heads. One million dollars will be used towards operations. Land costs are not involved because the route chosen is on city right-of-way or owned by Greensboro College. Work is being done for the city to have an easement and be grantee for a 1700 ft. section on the Greensboro College sports campus. According to Mike Simpson and Bonnie Kuester, maintenance of the 1700 ft. should be able to be absorbed by the Parks and Recreation operating costs budget.

Trip Brown stated that phase one (a and b) will consist of one staff person, equipment, and a truck estimated to cost approximately \$70,000. Once construction starts for phase two (the Murrow Blvd. section) there may be a need to add a second staff person which will bring the cost up to approximately \$79,000. The total maintenance cost, including phase three and four, is estimated at \$85,000.

Funding will come from a Fit Community grant of \$60,000 to assist with phase one. The Bicentennial Commission will allocate \$60,000 for marketing. Moses Cone Wesley Long Community Health Foundation has funded \$500,000 which helped pay for the BiPed Plan, but will also help fund the phase one design and construction. Team members have been working with local foundations to assist with funding. Phase one (a) will involve moving the Freeman Mill ramp 50 ft. to the west and installing a light at Lee Street. Work is being done with NCDOT to assist with funding this portion. The passing of County bonds in May would perhaps provide funding. Discussions have taken place with Greenways, Inc. to assist with a phase by phase funding strategy. They have been able to identify within the state approximately 185 million dollars annually perhaps from NCDOT, Clean Water Management Trust Fund, NC Railroad, federal programs, local foundations, county bonds, and a requested 10 million dollars from a possible transportation bond referendum in the fall. Brown then turned the meeting over to John McLendon, Downtown Greenway Project Team Co-Chair and Chair of the Technical Sub-Committee.

Beaman inquired if there is a timeframe on completing the greenway and what is the status of Norfolk Southern releasing the right-of-way from Greensboro College to Target on Lawndale Drive.

Trip Brown replied stating that he would like to see it complete in 5-10 years; however believes phase one (a and b) can be complete within 2 years.

McLendon replied stating that the right-of-way to Mill Street serves Chandler Concrete, the one remaining rail line user, and it is understood that Chandler Concrete is looking to relocate. Once the user moves, Norfolk Southern will have interest in converting the rail to a trail. There is no timeframe for this, but we are optimistic that this will happen within the next couple of years.

McLendon stated that the paved greenway trail is going to be a 12 ft. wide multi-use paved trail. This will be for transportation and recreation use and is why funding from the transportation bond and other transportation sources is being requested. It will provide an alternate means for transportation for people to commute downtown. There will be significant safety improvements crossing Lee Street, Market Street, and Friendly Avenue. McLendon invited the Commission to attend the Downtown Greenway meetings.

Ponton inquired who will use this trail, what type vehicles will be permitted, and will motorized handicap vehicles be allowed.

McLendon replied stating that it may be used by motorized handicap vehicles and any other vehicle that is not motorized.

Paul Brown, Commissioner, inquired if 12 ft. is the standard width for a trail of this type.

McLendon replied stating that trails of this nature vary from 8ft to 14ft. Some areas will not be a 12 ft. asphalt path, but a wide sidewalk.

Hoggard stated that he is appreciative of this project but stressed the concern of maintenance dollars from the Parks and Recreation budget which need to be taken in consideration due to the current budget situation.

McLendon stated that there is more work to be done in searching for partnerships regarding maintenance.

Harris stated that they have been working closely with staff and will continue to do so to discuss ways to solve the maintenance funding.

Ponton stated that in 6-8 years equipment will need to be replaced. This is a wonderful project, but we want to be sure what is built can be kept.

Although City Council has passed a resolution on this project the Commission felt it was important to take action in support of this project.

#### **Action Taken**

**A motion was made by Paul Brown and seconded by Marc Bush to support the Downtown Greenway project. A vote in favor was unanimous.**

#### **Greenway Name Change Request**

Mike Simpson, Watershed Parks and Trails Director, requested that the Commission consider a name change for the Lake Brandt Greenway to the Atlantic and Yadkin Greenway. The Atlantic and Yadkin Railway has been a very historical and significant part of Greensboro since the late 1800's. Originally this railway was a 163 mile passenger and freight line from Wilmington, NC to Mt. Airy, NC. The original route arrived in Greensboro on December 4, 1884 and was completed to Mt. Airy on June 11, 1887. The last scheduled trip that ran from Greensboro to Mt. Airy was in 1974. A section of the rails were removed which allowed us to have a greenway. There is a lot of support nationwide for abandoned rail lines to be converted to trail and greenway opportunities for recreational and transportation usage.

Simpson continued stating that a convenient and consistent name would be simpler for the users and would aide in marketing the trail and greenways. This greenway would eventually become part of the Downtown Greenway. This request has support from Action Greensboro, Guilford County, Piedmont Land Conservancy, the Town of Summerfield, Fat Tire Society, trail advocates and trail supporters throughout the community. All of these organizations believe this is a significant movement towards recognizing the history of the rail line and preserving it. Signage would be posted for 30 days informing the public of the name change request to allow time for the public to come forth with their support or objection. Simpson stated that this would be a very minimal expense to tax payers. Expenses would only be needed to update a few sentences in the Trails of Greensboro Map books and trail signage. As funds and land become available the greenway would be extended north towards Summerfield and Stokesdale and to the south as the opportunity arises.

Simpson stated that there would be opportunity for someone to name a section of the Greenway in honor of someone if giving a significant donation.

Parks and Recreation is working with GDOT on their upcoming bond.

Simpson invited the Commission to attend a second series of public meetings March 13, 2008 from 4:00-7:00pm at Peg Elementary School and Westover Church on Muirs Chapel Rd. The meetings are open forum allowing opportunity for citizens and interested parties to learn more about greenway projects and roadway improvement projects. GDOT has been very supportive of us financially and helping with alternative transportation and trails.

#### **Action Taken**

**A motion was made by Marc Bush and seconded by Paul Brown to proceed with the public posting. A vote in favor was unanimous.**

## **SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR**

**Chris Morrison**, member of the Sportsplex Parent Group, stated that he represents eight families and is coming before the Commission seeking guidance on how to obtain funds for parking lot expansion, obtaining youth sponsorships, security, promotions, and road side signage from Sixteenth Street and HWY 29 for the Sportsplex. Morrison suggested perhaps charging a fee for parking at the Sportsplex to obtain funds.

Hoggard suggested Morrison go before organizations informing them that donations could be given to the Parks and Recreation Friends Foundation as a charitable donation. Their funds would be distributed where they choose and they would receive a tax deduction. Hoggard continued stating that Parks and Recreation is working with the Greensboro Police Department to obtain a grant to offer scholarships for youth activities.

Kuester stated that she has met with Morrison and they came up with figures for the cost of a parking lot. A parking lot is very much needed and would be worth building. Kuester stated that she has met with the Assistant City Manager and discussed possibilities. Kuester requested that Morrison meet with Bob Morgan, Assistant City Manager and herself.

**Bill Burckley**, 701 Morehead Ave., requested that the Commission allow speakers from the floor to come before the Commission prior to agenda business items. Burckley also requested that the Commission reconsider the War Memorial Stadium item as he didn't feel the public had the opportunity to speak on the project. Burckley stated that the Commission passed a vote a couple of months ago to tear down 2/3-3/4 of the stadium and doesn't believe the public ever thought that was going to happen. Burckley requested that the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting agenda be posted on Channel 13 forty-eight hours in advance of their meeting.

Hoggard stated that if it is the will of the Commission the War Memorial Stadium item can be re-opened. The Commission would never turn down anyone wanting to speak. Speakers wanting to speak to a business item will be asked to do so before Commission discussion in the future.

Bush stated that War Memorial Stadium was an agenda item before many of the members of this board were serving. Different committees were formed to look at the issue of what to do with War Memorial Stadium after the new stadium was built. Bush stated that in his opinion the Commission followed every procedure that they should have in terms of the recommendation. The Commission worked hard in terms of the bond referendum that failed. Then this item came back to discuss ways to finance a lesser project. The Commission held conversations and made a recommendation to City Council with one opposition from our Chairman. The Commission worked through the process very publicly and dealt with it as we were supposed to.

Kuester stated that City Council passed a 2/3 bond package for the War Memorial Stadium project. Once a 2/3 bond is approved the plan for a project can not be changed.

Ponton stated that if it came down to what we would really like, we would like for War Memorial Stadium to stay just like it is and renovate it to the fullest. We were told this was not going to happen so we had no choice, there was only so much money because of the bond.

Brown stated the agenda is established plenty early and supports the agenda being aired on Channel 13 forty-eight hours in advance.

## **DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS**

Kuester recognized the following Employee of the Year nominees: Steve Branson, Service Excellence nominee, Brooks Mullane, Core Values nominee, and Casey Chesson, Team Player nominee. Kuester also recognized John Hughes, recipient of the Manager of the Year award.

Kuester informed the Commission of upcoming events.

Kuester stated that Dan Maxson and Candice Bruton are currently in Washington, DC with the North Carolina Recreation and Parks Association to meet with legislators to talk about issues in parks and recreation and how they can support us.

Kuester stated that this is the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our department and a committee of staff is being formed to discuss celebration ideas. A celebration would mostly likely be held in the fall.

### **COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS**

**John Beaman, Jr.** invited everyone to attend the 227<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle at Guilford Courthouse to be held the upcoming weekend. Price Park will host the event with approximately 330 re-enactors.

**Rose Marie Ponton** stated that she has attended a couple of the lectures as part of the Battle at Guilford Courthouse event. Ponton stated that we are very fortunate to have a lot going on in this city.

**Paul Brown** complimented Mark Gatehouse, April Harris, and Mike Simpson on their informative presentations.

**Marc Bush** stated that Parks and Recreation is featured prominently in the US Airways magazine.

**David Hoggard** stated that this is an active board who is trying to find ways to better communicate with City Council to keep them informed of what this board and department is doing. Hoggard thanked Councilperson Rakestraw for attending.

**Rakestraw** thanked the Commission members for serving and those citizens who serve on committees throughout Greensboro and Guilford County.

With no further business Hoggard adjourned the meeting at 8:03 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcie Richardson, Executive Assistant  
Greensboro Parks and Recreation